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skandinaviske Interesser, men ogsaa alle der interesserer sig for Literatur, especielt sammenlignende Litteraturhistorie.

H. RAASCHOU-NIELSEN.

Sorø, Danmark, i Januar 1916.

THE DRAMAS OF LORD BYRON, A CRITICAL STUDY, by
Samuel C. Chew, Jr. Pp. 181. Hesperia, Ergänzungsreihe,
Schriften zur englischen Philologie, Göttingen (Vandenhoeck
& Ruprecht) and Baltimore (The Johns Hopkins Press),
1915.

Much painstaking research has gone into the preparation of this study which, or a part of which, was in 1913 presented to Johns Hopkins University as a thesis for the doctorate. As is usually the case, however, with such dissertations, more material has been gathered than assimilated, and in all probability the author has not had leisure to do himself justice. The first two chapters deal with the drama of the romantic period and its influence upon Byron, in itself no small subject. These are interesting pages but unfortunately they deal with the literary rather than with the acting drama so that the plays at which Byron sneers in *English Bards* receive little or no attention. It was these that Byron thought of as the drama of his time and it was from them that he revolted. But his reaction was due, not to their formlessness or lack of regularity, as Dr. Chew thinks, for many of them were more regular than his own, but to their emptiness, their vapidly, and to the extravagance and unnaturalness which Dr. Chew mentions. In other words, it was the content, not the form of the contemporary plays that Byron disliked. It was the content of Joanna Baillie's work that called forth his commendation and it is in their nobler content that his own plays, which are often formless enough, differ most from those of his contemporaries. Dr. Chew's mistaken impression of the melodrama borrowed from France at this time would be corrected by referring to the thesis of Dr. Malcom McLeod (Harvard, 1914).

Dr. Chew is probably familiar with the work of Ibsen and the best playwrights of our day, although there is no evidence of this in his monograf. Indeed, the chapter entitled "Technique" gives one the impression that the writing of plays is subject to many rigid rules and that, given certain materials, there is but one way of developing them properly. Byron is criticised, for example, for beginning his dramas near the climax, notwithstanding the extremely effective use Ibsen and others have made of this very method. Any one who is familiar with the theater of to-day or with the many recent works on dramatic composition will hesitate to censure a play on *à priori* grounds. Byron's technic is obviously faulty and, as Dr. Chew points out, "In part this is due to wilful

disregard of the rules of the drama, in part to ignorance and inexperience." Indeed, one finishes the monograph with a deepened conviction that the works considered in it are not plays but, to use their author's own term, "dramatic poems."

Perhaps the best part of the present study is the twenty-five pages devoted to *Manfred*. Here, as in the chapters on the other dramas, the sources and circumstances of composition are carefully noted, and the characters and significance of the play discuss. The many influences that entered into *Manfred* are admirably pointed out, though nothing is said of Wordsworth or of the Shelleyesque character of the songs of the spirits in the first scene. It is in discussing *Manfred* that Dr. Chew offers a contribution of his own to what is still the Byron question. He finds the life of the lady of *The Dream*, who is generally thought to be Mary Chaworth, similar to that of Astarte, and concludes that Byron had betrayed her and that, as she had promised to be a sister to him, he felt the sin to be incest! The similarities between the lives of the two women are not, however, close, there is no evidence of Miss Chaworth's seduction, and if incest included cases of this kind, it must have lost its terrors for Byron.

RAYMOND D. HAVENS.

University of Rochester.